

Message Text

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21

ACTION EA-06

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 379

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

AMCONSUL UDORN

DIA IMMEDIATE

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 1855

LIMDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, TH

SUBJ: HITCH IN GOVERNMENT FORMATION

REF : BANGKOK 1830

SUMMARY: THE PRESS, WHICH THRIVES ON DISASTER, IS AWASH WITH DOOM
FEB 2 ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR A COALITION GOVERNMENT BASED ON A
DEMOCRAT-THAI NATION CORE. YESTERDAY'S MEETING (REFTEL)
RESULTED IN A DEADLOCK OVER WHO BECOMES MINISTER OF INTERIOR. THE
DEMOCRATS THREATEN TO GO IT ALONE. PRESSURES NEVERTHELESS
REMAIN STRONG FOR THE FORMATION OF A WORKABLE GOVERNMENT BY
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FEB 5. END SUMMARY.

1. INTERIOR IS THAILAND'S MOST IMPORTANT MINISTRY. (SEE BANGKOK A-143 OF 24 MAY 1974 FOR AN ANALYSIS OF ITS PERVASIVE ROLE.) ALL 71 GOVERNORS AND ALL OF THE SEVERAL HUNDRED DISTRICT OFFICERS COME UNDER ITS JURISDICTION. IT CONTROLS RURAL PRIMARY EDUCATION. MOST IMPORTANTLY, IT RUNS ELECTIONS. THE DEMOCRATS WANT TO REAPPOINT THE INCUMBENT, RETIRED POLICE MAJOR GENERAL LUANG ATTHASIT SITTHISUNTHON, WHO HAS AN UNASSAILABLE REPUTATION FOR PROBITY. HIS MINISTRY JUST MANAGED THE CLEANEST ELECTIONS IN THAI HISTORY.

2. THAI NATION, AS A PRICE FOR JOINING IN A GOVERNMENT WITH THE DEMOCRATS, WANTS TO CONTROL AT LEAST THE MINISTRIES OF INTERIOR AND DEFENSE. THE OSTENSIBLE REASON IS ITS CAMPAIGN PLANK OF LAW AND ORDER. THE DEMOCRATS WILL CONCEDE DEFENSE, BUT NOT INTERIOR. THAI NATION REALLY WANTS THE LATTER OUTFIT SO THAT IT CAN ARRANGE, IF NOT MANIPULATE, THE NEXT ELECTIONS IN ITS FAVOR.

3. AN INTRIGUING SIDESHOW WAS THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE TWO PROMINENT ARMY OFFICERS IN THE POLICE DEPARTMENT--GENERAL PRACHUAP SUNTHARANGKUN AND LT. GENERAL WITHUN YASAWAT, POLICE

DIRECTOR GENERAL AND ASSISTANT DIRECTOR GENERAL, RESPECTIVELY--WILL RESIGN THEIR POSTS FEB 3. AGAIN THE OSTENSIBLE REASON IS THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL APPOINT OTHERS TO RUN THE POLICE. WHILE THAT POSSIBILITY IS STRONG, THE MORE PROBABLE MOTIVE IS THE LONG-STANDING DESIRE OF BOTH MEN TO RETURN TO THE ARMY. BEHIND THE SCENES KINGMAKER GENERAL KRIT SIWARA HAS DESCRIBED PRACHUAP TO US AS "MY BOY." KRIT MAY WELL WANT TO USE PRACHUAP'S CONSIDERABLE TALENTS AND DISCREET METHOD OF OPERATION TO PLACE A MAN THAT HE TRUSTS IN SOME PROMINENT POSITION IN THE ARMY, WHICH HAS ONLY MODEST TALENT AMONG ITS TOP GENERALS.

4. TO RETURN TO THE MAIN THEME, THE DEMOCRAT-THAI NATION BARGAINING SESSION THAT TOOK PLACE YESTERDAY LEFT SOME ROOM FOR MANEUVER. THE TOP THREE THAI NATION LEADERS--PRAMAN
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ADIREKSAN, SIRI SIRIYOTHIN AND CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN--WERE ALL ABSENT. IN TRADITIONAL THAI FASHION THEY COULD REPUDIATE OR SOFTEN THE TERMS OF THEIR LOWER-LEVEL NEGOTIATORS. OUR SOUNDINGS INDICATE THAT THERE ARE STRONG PRESSURES FOR THE FORMATION OF THE GOVERNMENT ON FEB 5 WHEN THE KING, OR HIS DESIGNATED REPRESENTATIVE IF HIS MAJESTY IS STILL TOO ILL TO APPEAR, IS SCHEDULED TO PRESIDE OVER THE FORMAL OPENING OF THE NEW ASSEMBLY. ALL SIDES REALIZE THAT A PROLONGED DELAY IN THE

FORMATION OF A NEW GOVERNMENT IS IN THE INTEREST ONLY OF
CHAOS. WHILE WE CANNOT GUARANTEE THAT THAI NATION WILL SOFTEN
ITS STAND, WE WILL HAZARD A GUESS THAT THE CONTENDING PARTIES
WILL FIND A SIAMESE SOLUTION.
KINTNER

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